



# Ripple News

Rivers Involving People, Places & Leading by Example

Edition 2 Spring 2009

## RIPPLE finds a CURE for the Ballinderry River

**A new volunteer action group has been set up, as part of the RIPPLE project, to tackle local problems on the Ballinderry River. With tidy up days and access creation projects being planned, the CURE (Clean-Up the River Environment) Group launched itself, in January, with its first event, as Eamon Cullen, RIPPLE Champion, explains:**

“Despite difficult weather conditions, a small but hardy group of CURE volunteers donned waterproofs ‘n’ wellies, gathered tools and equipment and assembled at the Cabin Wood, near Cookstown, for CURE’s first action day of the season.

On arrival, volunteers were welcomed and quickly got to work along the river. The dedicated team carried out a remarkable amount of work on the day with over 100 meters of barbed wire fence and posts removed, 9 bags of litter picked, 8 bird boxes and 1 bat roost erected, 2 bird feeding stations built, 4 ‘bug hotels’ opened, log piles created, a small mammal box installed and a bumble bee box sited. Only high water levels in the river prevented some small sections of fence from being removed at the time.

It is CURE’s aim that volunteers enjoy events like this. The cheery faces on the hard working teams, while they toiled away knee deep in the mud, proved not only that they enjoyed the tasks but also felt a sense of empowerment and achievement when the tasks were completed.



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A tremendous amount of work done, I’m sure you’ll agree, but still a tremendous amount more to be done! So if there is a particular favourite spot of yours along the river, that you feel could do with some TLC, let us know.

CURE already has some future events in the planning stages at Kildress, Drapersfield and Ballinderry. So why not get involved by joining CURE and helping in any way you can. Remember it is your river too!”

Special thanks must go to the Woodland Trust for hosting the event at Cabin Wood, Cookstown District Council for the supply of litter bags, grabbers and the collection of the waste, Adrian McElhone of Traad Wildfowling and Conservation Club for making and supplying the bird boxes and Alan Keys for building the bat roost.

Volunteers are needed to carry out all sorts of work and surveys along the river. If you would like to join the CURE group contact Mark on 028 8676 1515 or e-mail [cure@ballinderryriver.org](mailto:cure@ballinderryriver.org)



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**Banks of the Ballinderry Fair**  
**Saturday 2nd May '09**  
**Fun for all the family**  
**See back cover for more details**





## ON THE RIVER THIS SEASON

This is the season of new life both in and along the river. The dollaghan, trout and salmon eggs that have lain beneath the gravel all winter will hatch as the water temperature begins to rise. Frank Mitchell, a RIPPLE Champion, explains, “The hatched baby fish, called alvins, will remain beneath the gravel until their tails and fins have fully formed, before emerging as fry; perfect miniatures of their much larger parents”.

Along the banks, Kevin Johnston, another RIPPLE Champion, recommends watching out for Buzzards in courtship, Peregrine Falcons and Ravens looking for roosting sites, the bright yellow flower of the Lesser Celandine, the Golden Saxifrage – common in wet woodland or ditches and Orange Peel Fungus along the river’s edge.

## COMMUNITY vs THE RIVER ALIENS

**Alien species are invading our river and making life difficult for the locals. Giant Hogweed, from central Asia, ‘Himalayan’ Balsam and ‘Japanese’ Knotweed, all introduced to estate gardens during the 18th and 19th centuries, have escaped along the river, carried by floods and, in some cases, people. These non-native invasive alien plants are bad news for native wildlife and, in the case of Giant Hogweed, can cause risk to human health with blistering of the skin on contact. Lyn Byrne, Invasive Species Officer and RIPPLE Champion explains how locals are taking on the river aliens.**

“The Invasive Plant Management Group has been set up to tackle the problem of non-native invasive plants on the Ballinderry River.

The group is made up of volunteers from the local community who are driven by their commitment to the river and the ‘combating the invasive species’ issue.

The group are carrying out key activities involved with controlling these pest plants, ranging from surveying the river banks to find out how bad the problem is, to spraying and controlling these species and monitoring the success of the groups work.

This project, known as the Ballinderry River Non-Native Invasive Plant Control Programme, aims to control and eventually eradicate these plants from the river and has received money from the Landfill Community Fund, through Cookstown District Council and the Ulster Wildlife Trust, to buy the equipment necessary for the job, train sprayers and draw up 5-10 year management plans for these nuisance plants.”

We are always looking for more volunteers to get involved in this project, simply contact us at Ballinderry Fish Hatchery on 028 8676 1515 to find out more.

Otherwise, if you know where these plants are, let us know by reporting it to the hatchery or at [reportit@bfhtrust.org](mailto:reportit@bfhtrust.org)



## MAPPING THE WAY FOR RIVER WILDLIFE ATLAS

**Kevin Johnston, a RIPPLE Champion, is looking for your help to create a river atlas of wildlife along the Ballinderry and its tributaries.**

The aim of the River Wildlife Atlas is to create a ‘one-stop-shop’ for information on the plants and animals that live in and along the river. There is already a lot of information on what’s out there but this is scattered throughout government departments, wildlife and conservation organisations, academic institutions and in the knowledge held by local people.

Firstly, we are appealing to anyone with a local knowledge on wildlife to help us. If you have any information on the types of flora and fauna in the area, then please contact Ballinderry Fish Hatchery on 028 8676 1515 or [mark@bfhtrust.org](mailto:mark@bfhtrust.org)

Secondly, if you are out and about and spot anything such as birds, plants, animals etc then please get in touch with the hatchery or e-mail [reportit@bfhtrust.org](mailto:reportit@bfhtrust.org)



# A LESSON FROM HISTORY ON THE BALLINDERRY

**On Saturday May 2nd the National Trust's famous Wellbrook Beetling Mill will play host the fifth annual Banks of the Ballinderry Fair.**

**Organised by the Ballinderry Fish Hatchery and funded by WWF and the Heritage Lottery Fund, this year's fair will stage the launch of the RIPPLE Project. This family fun day, aimed at encouraging people to learn about and enjoy the river, is held at a location of historical importance which stands as a testament to the power and importance of the mighty Ballinderry. Beth Black, property manager explains:**



“Wellbrook Beetling Mill was one tiny but essential element in a network of rural and urban textile mills, which came together to create a huge industry involved in the production of Irish Linen. At one time there were six mills at Wellbrook, all feeding into the worldwide manufacturing system.

The supply of water to drive mills and the need to impound and control it, in order to harness its power, were key factors in locating mills; the amount of flow and height or fall determined the power available and the type of waterwheel that could be used.

The waterwheel at Wellbrook drove the mechanism which beetled linen. Beetling was the process by which the woven linen was beaten with wooden hammers, known as beetles, to soften the fabric and produce a beautiful sheen. This was the final process in the manufacturing of linen.

The site for Wellbrook Beetling Mill was identified in 1764 by Hugh Faulkner, from Cookstown, who had received a grant of £300 from the Linen Board in Dublin to encourage the use of the Ballinderry River for the industry.

Few watermills were driven directly by large rivers, so a weir was constructed across the river which impounded water. This was then directed into a headrace, which delivered the water to a breastshot wheel. The water was then returned to the river through a tailrace, which flows through what was once the bleaching green.

On downstream, the Ballinderry drove mills at Coosktown, the townland of Tullyweary and Coagh which were involved in all sorts of industry such as corn milling, scutching, spade making and even dairy production.

At the start of the First World War, 95,000 people were employed in the Ulster Linen industry, which dominated the world market, but with the mass production and importation of cheap cotton the industry quickly collapsed. Wellbrook's last big orders were for linen to cover the wings of WW1 aeroplanes before the industry began to decline. The mill finally closed its doors in 1969 and was donated by Mr Johnny Henderson, of Coleraine, to the National Trust.

Wellbrook stands as a reminder of a bygone age when the river was at the heart of the community. People lived, worked and played by the river, depending on it for every part of their day to day lives. RIPPLE is bringing the river back to life and if we can enjoy the river, at places like Wellbrook, we can rekindle a connection with the beautiful Ballinderry River.”

A living history event will bring the mill back to life at this year's Banks of the Ballinderry Fair, alongside a host of stalls and activities providing fun for all the family. See the events guide on the back page for more details or contact Mark on 028 867 61515.

## GETTING INVOLVED COULDN'T BE EASIER

If you would like to get involved in the RIPPLE project or find out what is happening on the river in your area then please contact us.

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# River Events

All events are **FREE** of charge.

**Extended until  
26 March 2009  
Ballinderry River:  
from source to resource**

For millennia the Ballinderry River has shaped the landscape between the slopes of Slieve Gallion and Evishanoran Mountain to the winding shore of Lough Neagh. Its journey is compelling, passing quiet hills, ancient bridges, turbulent weirs and bustling villages, each stretch having a unique story to tell. For the first time the Mid-Ulster Photography Club captures this journey in pictures, bringing this story to life.  
*Burnavon Arts Centre, Cookstown*

**Saturday 14 &  
Sunday 15 March 2009  
CURE Event –  
Kildress Clean-up Days**

Join the CURE volunteer group and the Kildress Angling Club on the Kildress stretch of the Ballinderry for litter picking, bush cutting, and access creation work, including repairing foot styles and path clearance. Great opportunity to get out into the fresh air, meet new people and help tidy up the Ballinderry River.  
*Clean-up being held just off the Lower Kildress Road (event signposted from Drum Manor lay-by, Drum Road). Contact Eamon for more details on 028 867 62899*

**Saturday  
28 March 2009  
Ballinderry Bird Watch  
9am – 11.30am**

Join Seamus Burns on a walk from Coyle's Cottage to the Footgo to see the native and migratory birdlife that frequents the lower Ballinderry River and the shores of Lough Neagh. Good footwear and raincoat recommended. Binoculars essential.  
*Meet at Coyle's Cottage, Kinturk*  
Tea, coffee and scones provided by Coyle's Cottage Womens Group.

**Saturday 4 April 2009  
Ballinderry Fish  
Hatchery and River  
School Open Day  
12 – 4pm**

Come and learn what goes on behind the doors of the hatchery. See this year's young fish hatching from their eggs, learn about Europe's most successful breeding programme for the globally endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel and venture in to the Glen and over the waterfall to meet the mysterious White-clawed Crayfish.  
*Ballinderry Fish Hatchery, Orritor Road, Cookstown*

**Saturday 2 May 2009  
Banks of the  
Ballinderry Fair  
12pm – 5pm**

Fun for all the family. Visit the river aquarium to discover what lurks beneath the ripples of the Ballinderry, try your hand at fly-tying, name your duck for the mill-race duck race and release your own baby dollaghan trout into the river. Learn how the river helped drive the linen industry at the Ballinderry's famous Beetling Mill.  
Fun and games on the banks of the river.  
*Wellbrook Beetling Mill, Corkhill*  
FREE admission to the Fair.  
Entry fee for Living History Tour of the mill (NT members FREE).

**Saturday 6 July 2009  
River Skills: Non-native  
Invasive Plant  
Identification Course  
10.30am**

Join Lyn Byrne, Invasive Species Officer, and Ronnie Irvine, local botanist, on a walk and talk invasive plant identification course. Learn which plants have invaded our river from far away shores and the impacts they are having on our native wildlife. Join the battle to bring these plants under control and become a surveyor for the Ballinderry River Non-native Invasive Plant Control Programme.  
*Meet at Ballinderry Fish Hatchery, Orritor Road.*  
A field visit to Loughry and Ardtrea will follow a short introductory talk.

All events are **FREE** of charge.

